



Episode Number: 9

Episode Title: Behind the Scenes of Ialoni in Adjara

Interviewee: P'at'i Tap'ladze and Eteri Darchidze

Date of Interview: 11.2.2021

Date of Podcast publication: 1.4.2021

Music Makharia by Ialoni

Holly Taylor-Zuntz 00:00

Welcome to Voices of the Ancestors, where we explore Georgian polyphonic songs

Susan Thompson

and the women who sing them.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Hello and welcome to Voices of the Ancestors with me, Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Susan Thompson

And me Susan Thompson

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

And today I am speaking to you from the village of [Gomarduli](#) in High Adjara

Susan Thompson

And I'm in Tbilisi. But in February I too was in a village in High Adjara with Nino Naneishvili and Ialoni. Nino very kindly invited me to join her for the trip, which turned out to have a multifaceted purpose. One element was to film a sequence for the Library of Congress in America - their, for their 'Homegrown' concert series.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Yes that's the concert I saw last week presented by the [American Folklife Center](#) - and they said the concert would be posted online on the [Library of Congress YouTube Channel](#) and is free. So if you want to see the concert the link will be in the show notes and on the website.

But Susan - you said the filming was only part of the trip?

Susan Thompson

Oh yes - Nino was also very excited to meet with the elders from any singing families. And she'd been desperately waiting to go to High Adjara for ages to meet with 90Yr old P'at'i Tapladze and

she'd been waiting for months to see her and meet her - but the pandemic got in the way. For ethnomusicologists - meetings with the elders of singing families they're just golden moments.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

So do we have podcast guests today?

Susan Thompson

Well kind of. Um Do you remember how on our live episode, we were chatting with listeners about who their dream guest in 2021 would be - and I said something like my dream guest would be someone steeped in folk song, that I don't even know exists - well you have to be careful what you wish for because thanks to Nino, I met P'at'i Tap'ladze and her daughter Eteri Darchidze and that's the story of this episode.

Music: Live recording of P'at'i and Ialoni singing Nai nai by cinematographer [Leo Decristoforo](#)

Susan Thompson

So meeting with P'at'i and Eteri reminded me of the work of an ethnomusicologist - Edisher Garakanidze. His name crops up a lot in other episodes - especially number 7 with Joan Mills.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Yeah perhaps now would be a good time to go into a bit more detail about Edisher....

Susan Thompson

Oh OK - um yeah perhaps the best thing is if I read some of Edisher's academic writing¹ about the performance of Georgian Folk Song.

[Music by Eter Darchidze](#)

he said :-

“Musical folklore’ is often used to denote two very different phenomenon, on the one hand, an authentic, centuries-old village-based singing tradition, and on the other hand the relatively recent, about a century ago, development of the performance of special ‘stage versions’ of traditional compositions in formal concerts.”

‘Primary singing folklore’ denotes traditional music without any changes, without any arrangements of external influences, designed to ‘improve’ its quality. ‘Primary folklore’ is the true result of people's collective creativity. ‘Primary performance’ is the performance of the ‘primary folklore’ according to the performance norms of the traditional village society. The terms ‘secondary folklore’ and ‘secondary performance’ designate conscious (or unconscious) changes at the ‘primary’ or ‘authentic’ norms.”

Holly Taylor-Zuntz: OK so what he's saying is that people were trying to differentiate between authentic folk singing and performance on stage?

¹ Performance of Georgian Folk Song Edisher Garakanidze Tbilisi 2007 ISBN 99940-933-2-0

P'at'i

Speaking in Georgian - Chemi professia

Susan Thompson:

Yes, and that was P'at'i introducing herself.

We asked her to say her name and her profession and she said something like - "My profession is to work in the fields to work with cows, to dance and to play. And then she jokes - I have a lot of professions, so also when I have guests, to look after them is also my profession.

I felt that the next words of Edisher were sitting before us -

"Folk song is an inseparable part of village life. The whole life of a person in a Georgian community, from crucial moments in life to everyday existence, was accompanied by singing."

HollyTaylor-Zuntz

Oh wow, and that's the whole concept that I understood behind laloni's film - dawn to dusk. And in fact laloni actually means dawn doesn't it. In the live episode we were talking about working with translators, did P'at'i and Eteri speak English by any chance?

Susan Thompson

I wish - no - so you're gonna hear a bit from Ana R. Japaridze who speaks both English and Georgian, and has been filming laloni for many months for her own project. But perhaps it's best if I start at the beginning, when Nino first suggested going to Adjara. (Holly: Yes)

Back in January, the idea of going to a village in high Adjara, from Tbilisi, to meet with elderly singers seemed enticing, but full of uncertainty. The trains and coaches to Batumi were not running, the road conditions up to the village were unknown and very weather dependent. There were many practical questions - what size vehicle would we need, how long would it take 7hrs or 9hrs, did we need a local driver and 4 wheel drive transport to get from Batumi to the village, could we get there even in daylight?

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Oh wow it that sounds like a larger version of the arrangements it took to get me and just one other person up to Gomarduli.

Susan Thompson

Yeah I'm sure listeners who have travelled in Georgia will relate. So, Nino had been ringing Eteri every day in the month before the trip to be sure the family and P'at'i were confident to meet and host the group. Then with a week to go she heard that a neighbour in the village had tested positive for Corona.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Oh no!

Susan Thompson

I know - I was sure Nino was gonna say the family didn't want to go ahead - but I was wrong. So we left Tbilisi in a minibus at 7am with 6 of Ialoni. Nino and Ana went ahead the day before, so she could meet the family and give them time to get comfortable before we arrived.

And the drive to Batumi was mercifully uneventful, after a brief stop to walk on the beach and stretch our legs, we set off up the valley into the mountains.

The journey up to Shuakhevi was fairly straightforward. But after that our driver Levan, he had to stop so many times. Whenever he saw a group of boys, or a boy he would stop, wind the window down and call to them and ask for directions. There was a point on the journey when the road sort of went in a 'Y' shape and we could actually see a sign with the words to the village we were going to. It looked like it was pointing uphill, but uphill that was an unmade road, it was a muddy track, whereas downhill it was still the metalled road and Levans phone was convinced we wanted to go down hill - he was following a SAT Nav. But he stopped and he'd rung up Nino and Nino had asked around and she said no, no you take the upper road. So - you could tell how concerned he was because he'd never driven that high above Shuakhevi before. So we set off up this muddy track. And oh the number of times we stopped after that increased. There was a point when there was this small group of boys - they must have been only about 6. But they were certain we were on the right road, going the right way, so we carried on and we carried on. Um and with - It was getting darker - we saw this row of flags in the distance and I thought oh great you know we've got to our destination but no, we'd got to the village ethnographic museum. And another stop to speak to an old gentleman a 'batono' and he there was much arm waving and we've got to go all the way round the valley and along a bit. So we drove on - I don't know it might have been another quarter of an hour after that. And then finally we stopped by this stream. And that was it, we could go no further in the van. So we all got out, and it turned out someone had been sent to meet us, someone called Nodar. So we unloaded and we then had to carry all our belongings along this track. And for the Ialoni singers, this meant carrying all their costumes, carrying a chonguri, some apples, a cross, suitcases. Um - not easy. And we were walking along this stony track and it was dusk. And then the track, turned to snow, and then the track went under some trees, and then you could just about see a house. 'Cause although we were in a village, it's not like in an English village when you can see house, by house, by house, all in a sort of cluster - they are all very spread out. So you know when we were walking along we couldn't see any other houses. I think Phil was sending messages to Nino every few minutes you know going - we under trees now, or we're on snow - are we going the right way? So when we saw this house, we were getting very excited and thought oh our destination. But no, as we got closer it was unlit, there was a painting on the side of it - in the dusk I had no idea what it was. Um and then it actually got dark and we had to turn the torches on.

So with snow crunching underfoot I was chatting with Lika from laloni, and it turned out she was from Svaneti so then I understood why she just seemed so comfortable walking in the dark in the high mountains. We got out of the trees. And we could see these twinkling lights of a wooden house and that was our destination house, fortunately. And another one of the laloni singers was saying she was so curious to know how P'at'i and her family lived in this remote village.

Um so it must have been about 12hrs after we'd left Tbilisi when we arrived, and we were tired but excited, um and those twinkling lights of the Darchidze family home - ah! The door opened and we walked straight into a room with a long laden supra table.

Music: *from laloni at the supra*

So any tiredness we had, had to fall away rather quickly. As we were introduced - there was almost a welcoming line - a greeting line of people with quizzical faces - you know - Nino was there to welcome us and Eteri was there and um her sister Vardo and her brother Avtandil. At that point I didn't know anybody's name - it was just Oh a sea of faces - who are all these people. - So ah they did us proud we had such an extraordinary supra. I mean, if you can imagine this is a family that is used to entertaining and having visitors and this was the first supra they had had in 12mths, because of the pandemic. So there was singing, dancing and poetry, toasting, eating. Well I should say feasting really 'cause there were at least 3 regional delicacies on the table that I recognised - achma, sonori/sinori and there was this cheese cooked in butter.

Music: *from laloni & P'at'i at the supra*

Um.. you might think that was the sort of evening that would go on and on. But because we all knew we had to get up the next morning to start filming, so that we could catch the dawn, because you know laloni means dawn, um it was actually quite an early night I think. We were shown up to our room. We passed through this hallway and it was just filled of sacks - I think they were full of nuts, and there were pumpkins and jars, and jars of brightly coloured preserves. So, yeah, it gives an idea of how people in a remote village live. And at one point Ana asked for some coffee with milk, because she thought she'd seen some in the fridge. And then she said to me afterwards when she translated. She no, no we don't have milk because we won't have milk for another 20 days. Which we were trying to work out how would they know they'd have milk in 20 days and I think it must be because they would know when their cow was going to calve and have milk to share.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz:

Oh I see.

Susan Thompson

Yeah - So that next day - um, you know, it was a strange morning, nobody really seemed to know what time the sun would get up or what time it would pop it's head over the mountains. So

there were various people sort of watching to see when that would be. Then we were waiting for the film crew to come from Merisi. Um and Anna and I were just sort of chatting as all this was happened, swirling around us, about the podcast and then about how you present the information to our listeners in a way that is meaningful and she was so kind 'cause she then volunteered to be my translator on that day. So while Ialoni were being filmed outside, we set up in the kitchen by the stove and you've seen that library of Congress concert so you'll have been in that kitchen too and heard the pot bubbling on the stove.

Um, the idea was to ask each family member to introduce themselves and say what Voices of the Ancestors meant to them - but as I've experienced so often in Georgia - I just don't know how to ask a question to get to the answer. And Ana was great - she adapted the questions on the hoof, so that P'at'i might understand.

P'at'i - P'at'i laughs - and speaks in Georgian -Professia Ras sa gambia?

Susan Thompson

The minute Ana mentioned ancestors voices P'at'i started to sing:-

P'at'i - Sings da da lida lida lado la lada la lida o ta lida lado lada la lido lido o.

Susan Thompson

I tried a different version of the question with Eteri - referring to the travellers and the old songs from Joans episode. This approach was much more fruitful - Eteri told us about her work as a teacher - she showed us some videos where 20 or more children sat in a semi-circle learning panduri or chonguri together. And then she talked about how her students react when they perform.

Eteri speaks in Georgian about her students crying and the overwhelming feeling felt by Eteri yesterday.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz - Ooh that word 'stremli' - it means tears, it's almost onomatopoeic.

Susan Thompson Yeah, and here's Ana's translation

Ana R. Japaridze Did you get that part?

Susan Thompson No

Ana R. Japaridze So her, her, she often notices that her students have tears coming down their faces when they are performing - they say they are happy and they don't know why they are crying but she feels it is part of the same thing. (Susan OK) Of feeling some deep connection I guess.

Eteri - speaking in Georgian -...gushin...ar vitsi

Ana R. Japaridze She's saying that yesterday she felt it as well the same kind of overwhelming feeling - more of a joyful feeling I think she said.

Susan Thompson

So we heard from P'at'i and Eteri, how P'at'i had passed on her love of music to her children -

Music: laloni can be heard singing outside the window

Ana R. Japaridze Did you understand it? (Susan no) At home they were always um working and singing at the same time. And they would have these big parties basically where someone would just start a little trail of a song then everyone would join in and it would be very spontaneous.

Susan Thompson

Time slipped away and there didn't seem to be the right moment to catch the rest of the family. But perhaps I will get the chance to go back - one day.... But as Ana said we did catch the eldest family member in a good relaxed mood.

Music: P'at'i - Sings

And the last question that Ana put to P'at'i it was 'gold'

Ana R. Japaridze speaks in georgian.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz: Ana said as I see it's not a lot people on the villages now and as you save these traditions maybe people come back? And this was P'at'i's reply.

P'at'i - speaking in Georgian -

Holly Taylor-Zuntz:

So I think what she's saying is, I will be proud of, or grateful for, my ancestors for what they passed on, and she didn't lose their traditions So she can see them face to face and go to the cemetery proudly because she knows they are happy that their lifestyle and traditions are saved!

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Oh it's been so wonderful hearing about

Susan Thompson

Oh that's a pleasure. But that isn't the end of the story ...this trip had a multifaceted purpose - the next day we went to Ozurgeti to meet with another 'elder' of a singing family - Rebuli Mzhavanadze - So Nana Mzhavanadze's uncle. It was a total delight to hear him sing with such mm quiet freedom. We met him in a park, beside a road, so good for the pandemic, but it wasn't

the best conditions for recording. But here's a little snippet of him singing Batonebo with Ialoni, to wet your appetite for our next Episode where we hear from [Nana Mzhavanadze](#), Rebuli and his daughter.

Music: Batonebo - field recording of Rebuli Mzavanadze and Ialoni in a park in Ozurgeti

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Thank you for listening to Voices of the Ancestors with Holly Taylor-Zuntz and Susan Thompson. Thank you to all the people who helped make this episode possible, especially our guests P'at'i, Eteri, and Johnny Darifi for sound production, as well as Nino Naneishvili and [Ialoni](#), Ana R-Japaridze, [Leo and Marina Decristoforo](#).

And thank you to our listeners to our supporters on Ko-fi

Our monthly subscribers will have access to **behind the scenes photos and videos of the trip, so if you're intrigued and want to support us, you could go to our website voicesoftheancestors.co.uk and click on the coffee cup.**

While you're there you will also find a transcript of this episode and all our episodes
Music was by Ialoni, Eteri Darchidze Pati Tapladze and Rebuli Mzhavandaze.

Holly: Bye for now

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